

HEAT STRESS (SUN STRESS)

Hot weather triggers a variety of medical emergencies. Even healthy people should take it easy during extremely high temperatures, and those with respiratory and other health problems must be especially careful. Stay out of the sun as much as possible. Drink extra fluids, but avoid alcoholic beverages. Alcohol can cause dehydration.

The best ways to prevent a sun stress emergency are:

- Drink before you're thirsty and drink often.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Wear a hat or cap, keep the neck covered and wear loose fitting clothing.
- If you can, work in the cool hours of the day or evening.

The greatest amount of heat loss from the body occurs at the head. This is why it is important to wear a hat or cap in the sun.

The Guam Fire Department does not recommend the use of table salt or salt tablets to replace body electrolytes. Many electrolyte replacement drinks are available on the market. Electrolytes are crucial for the proper functioning of the body. Common electrolytes are:

- Calcium
- Sodium
- Potassium

Heat-related injuries fall into three major categories:

- Heat cramps
- Heat exhaustion
- Heatstroke

Heat cramps are muscular pains and spasms that occur when the body loses electrolytes during profuse sweating or when inadequate electrolytes are taken into the body. They usually begin in the arms, legs or abdomen, and often precede heat exhaustion.

Treatment for heat cramps is to rest in the shade, get near a fan, spray the person with water and massage the cramp.

Heat exhaustion is a medical emergency. When a person is suffering from heat exhaustion, they will perspire profusely and most likely will be pale.

Taking the patient to a cool place, applying cool compresses, elevating the feet and giving the patient fluids, best treats it.

Heat stroke is the worst heat-related injury. The brain has lost its ability to regulate body temperature. The patient will be hot, reddish and warm to the touch. Their temperature will be markedly high and there will be no perspiration. This is a medical emergency and 9-1-1 should be called.

The emergency care of heatstroke is to cool the body as quickly as possible. One of the best methods for cooling the body during a heat emergency is to wrap the patient in cool, wet sheets.